United Nations

Press Release

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THURSDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- Iraq signs agreement welcoming United Nations humanitarian help to refugees in northern part of country.

- Secretary-General says victory of allied countries over Iraq was result of multilateral action "legitimized" by Organization.

- Secretary-General asks Security Council to authorize United Nations mission in El Salvador as soon as possible.

- Germany donates $251.5 million for humanitarian emergency aid to Iraqi refugees.

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The Government of Iraq signed an agreement in Baghdad today welcoming United Nations efforts to promote the voluntary return home of Iraqi displaced persons, and the Organization's humanitarian measures to avert new flows of Iraqi refugees.

In a memorandum signed also by the Secretary-General's Executive Delegate for the United Nations Humanitarian Programme for Iraq, Kuwait and the Iraq/Iran and Iraq/Turkey border areas, Sadruddin Aga Khan, Iraqi authorities promised their full support to and cooperation with the United Nations and its specialized agencies and programmes.

The Iraqi Government said it would assist in the establishment of United Nations sub-offices and humanitarian centres in the border areas, to be staffed with United Nations civilian personnel as well as personnel from other humanitarian organizations, in order to provide urgent assistance and relief to the refugees.

It further would allow the United Nations, in agreement and cooperation with Iraq, to organize air lifts to the areas concerned, as well as transportation by road of humanitarian assistance from and through the neighbouring countries.

(more)

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Both parties agreed that humanitarian assistance would be impartial and that all civilians in need, wherever they are located, would be entitled to receive it.

The memorandum is a result of discussions held in Baghdad between the Iraqi Government and the two United Nations missions sent to the area. It will be reviewed on 31 December with a view to assessing any further need for humanitarian operations.

A United Nations official told correspondents today that the Secretary-General had welcomed the agreement which he said would enable the United Nations to provide "desperately needed humanitarian assistance" to the suffering civilian population in all parts of Iraq, including displaced persons and returnees. The official said the leaders of the two missions, Sadruddin Aga Khan and Eric Suy, would go to Paris tomorrow to report to the Secretary-General and to discuss the urgent measures now needed for complete implementation of the new plan.

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Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar said yesterday in a statement to the European Parliament that the victory of the allied, or coalition, countries over Iraq was "not a victory for the United Nations".

"It was not a United Nations war", he said. The victory was the result of a multilateral action authorized and, therefore, legitimized by the United Nations.

He went on to say that the only war which could nowdays be considered just was the sanctioned war provided for in the United Nations Charter as the last resort and decided upon by the international community, as represented in the Security Council. The recent conflict in the Gulf was proof, he said, that international security could only be collective in nature, and that a military Power could not engage in hostilities without multilateral support, without the support of other States and without the legitimacy that only the United Nations could confer on its action.

The establishment of the new world order would have to take place within the framework of the United Nations, the Secretary-General said, but a United Nations which did not resort to the use of double standards -- a United Nations whose impartiality ensured its credibility.

Addressing the issue of chemical weapons, Mr. Perez de Cuellar reminded the Parliament that negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament at Geneva were at an advanced stage. He called on the European representatives to use their influence and power as parliamentarians to work for a total international ban on chemical weapons.

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Raising the question of arms sales, the Secretary-General expressed hope that arms sales would be limited in the Middle East, the main purchaser of arms, and in some developing countries, which he said "sometimes give priority to guns rather than to the bread that their peoples need".

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The Secretary-General has asked the Security Council to authorize "without delay" the first phase of a United Nations mission in El Salvador (ONUSAL) to monitor and promote human rights, investigate violations, and educate the Salvadorian people on human rights issues.

In a report to the Council, dated 16 April, the Secretary-General recommended that the mission be established as soon as possible, in advance of a cease-fire agreement.

He said he was convinced that the new mission "would promote a significant improvement in the human rights situation in El Salvador and would also act as a positive impetus to the negotiations" under way between the Salvadorian Government and the Frente Farabundo Marti para la Liberacion Nacional (FMLN).

The ONUSAL could begin its functions in June, the Secretary-General said, after authorization by the Council and approval of costs and personnel by the General Assembly.

According to the agreement reached last July by the Salvadorian Government and FMLN, the mission will monitor the human rights situation in El Salvador, investigate specific cases of alleged violations, and promote respect for human rights.

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The Government of Germany has contributed $251.5 million for humanitarian emergency aid to Iraqi refugees.

The Permanent Mission of Germany to the United Nations said in a press release yesterday that the aid was closely coordinated with German and international relief organizations as well as with other Governments. Germany has already donated $17.6 million as part of the $185 million emergency aid provided by the European Economic Community (EEC).

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